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ABSTRACT

This document lists the national quality standards for volunteer literacy programs that were developed by Laubach Literacy Action in a 2-year project that began in 1994 and involved the following activities: extensive review of existing literacy quality standards and guidelines; analysis of previous national efforts to identify the elements associated with quality programs; and solicitation of input from national focus groups and local programs. The following items are addressed in the standards: governance (boards of directors/advisory groups, responsibilities and coordination of boards of directors/advisory groups, and organizational documents); program management (mission statements, long-range plans, public relations, fiscal management, human resource management, resource development, and program evaluation); program operations (learner recruitment, learner intake and placement, curriculum, instruction, instructional materials, learner assessment, social services support, and learner development); and volunteer development (volunteer recruitment, training for tutoring and nontutoring volunteers, and volunteer management). (MN)

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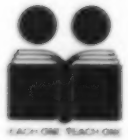
NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARDS
for
VOLUNTEER LITERACY PROGRAMS



LAUBACH LITERACY ACTION
U.S. Program Division of Laubach Literacy

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PREFACE

As the nation's largest volunteer-oriented literacy organization, Laubach Literacy Action is committed to promoting quality literacy services.

In 1994, Laubach Literacy Action began a two-year process to develop a set of national program standards for volunteer literacy programs. This development process involved an extensive review of existing literacy quality standards and guidelines. It also included an analysis of previous national efforts to identify the elements that are associated with quality programs. We incorporated input from both national focus groups and local programs.

Laubach Literacy Action contracted with Judy Alamprese of the COSMOS Corporation to direct and develop the standards. If you have questions or comments regarding this project or the standards themselves, please contact Laubach Literacy Action.

We hope that our efforts will encourage local programs to review their structure and activities in light of nationally recognized standards. We believe that the publication and dissemination of these standards is an important step in ensuring quality programming at the local level.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARDS
for
VOLUNTEER LITERACY PROGRAMS

I. GOVERNANCE

A. Board of Directors/Advisory Group A program should have a system of accountability in the form of a board of directors/advisory group. This group should represent a cross-section of private- and public-sector agencies, businesses and industries, and the program's learners and volunteers.

B. Responsibilities of a Board/Advisory Group The role of the board of directors/advisory group is to:

- Create written bylaws and policies
- Provide program oversight and support
- Advise in matters of financial management and participate in fundraising
- Carry out the program's stated mission and purpose
- Raise public awareness about the program

C. Coordination of Board of Directors/Advisory Group A program should have a staff member (paid or volunteer) who has responsibility for coordinating the activities of the board/advisory group.

D. Organizational Document A program should have a written organizational document (e.g., by-laws) and a mechanism for forming advisory or planning groups to address specialized needs.

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II. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

A. Mission Statement A program should have a mission statement that specifies the program's goals and objectives, and that reflects the needs of the community.

B. Long-Range Plan A program should have a long-range plan that delineates the activities that will be carried out to meet the program's goals and objectives.

C. Public Relations A program should have:

- A plan for the types of public relations activities that are to be carried out. These activities should include efforts to promote public awareness about literacy, reach a broad range of community groups, and involve learners in the public relations process. The program should include:
- A process for communicating with the media on an ongoing basis
- A variety of print and nonprint materials for promoting the program
- A process for keeping apprised of other literacy programs' public awareness activities

D. Fiscal Management A program should have:

- An annual budget that is approved by the board of directors/advisory group
- A position and practice regarding program liability insurance
- An annual financial review or audit that is conducted by an external party
- An accounting process that will support a successful audit

E. Human Resource Management A program should have:

- Written personnel policies that are reviewed at least annually
- Written job descriptions for all paid and volunteer staff
- A formal performance review system
- Budgeted funds for staff development activities

F. Resource Development A program should have:

- A process for recording the actual costs of operating the program
- A fund-raising plan that includes budgeted activities and diversified strategies for soliciting fiscal as well as in-kind support
- A board/advisory group or other equivalent group that has fund-raising responsibilities and the necessary training to carry them out

G. Program Evaluation A program should have:

- A system for collecting ongoing information about program participants, tutor and learner retention rates, and learner achievement
- A process for analyzing this data, at least annually, in order to assess the program's success and help redesign program activities
- A process for evaluating the outcomes from specially funded activities
- An annual report that describes the program's activities and outcomes

III. PROGRAM OPERATIONS

A. Learner Recruitment A program's recruitment activities should be varied and include:

- Identification of target populations of potential learners
- Specific strategies for reaching the target populations of learners
- A process for monitoring recruitment activities to determine whether program participants are representative of the target populations
- A process for determining the number of learners that can be adequately served by the program and for determining when additional resources are needed to meet the program's needs

B. Learner Intake and Placement Intake and placement activities are important for assessing a learner's strengths and weaknesses and for developing an appropriate instructional program. In order to place learners in an appropriate tutoring arrangement, a program should have:

- An intake process for determining an entering learner's literacy strengths and weaknesses, goals, and special needs
- A process for clarifying the expectations of a learner and the services that the program can offer
- A process for referring learners whose educational goals at the time of intake can best be met by other programs
- A system for matching a learner with an individual tutor or a group
- A process for ensuring an appropriate and effective instructional setting
- A process for reassigning learners and tutors when the relationship is not functional or otherwise requires a change
- Strategies to transition learners to other programs as their skills develop and needs change

C. **Curriculum** A program's curriculum should:

- Be broad-based and address the needs of a variety of learners
- Match the program's objectives and learners' goals, needs, and interests
- Provide for the logical progression of skills
- Address the transfer needs of learners who plan to continue their education

D. **Instruction** A program's instruction should:

- Be learner centered
- Reflect a multifaceted approach that includes an active role for learners
- Be appropriate for the various learning styles of program participants

E. **Instructional Materials** A program's instructional materials should:

- Address the needs of culturally diverse adults
- Incorporate a variety of formats and contexts, including different types of technology (where possible)

- Match the content of the learning objectives being addressed
- Include enrichment materials that can be used to supplement standard program materials

F. Learner Assessment Assessment should be conducted to monitor learners' progress and to determine the overall achievement made by learners. The program's assessment process should:

- Utilize various forms of assessment that accurately reflect a learner's progress toward his/her goals and actively involve the learner
- Be consistent with the program's curriculum and learning objectives
- Include a process for program participants to identify their learning styles and evaluate their skills and interests
- Provide information that can be used by tutors to refine their instructional methods or to meet learners' goals and needs
- Provide information about learners' achievement that can be aggregated across learners
- Provide information that can be understood by and given to learners

G. Social Services Support Learners often have needs that require support from social services. To address these needs, a program should have:

- A process for the ongoing assessment of learners' social service needs and the identification of appropriate community services that can address these needs
- A plan for working with social services agencies to refer learners and documentation that appropriate referrals have been made

H. Learner Development The involvement of learners in a program is critical to their motivation and success. A program should have a process for involving learners that includes:

- A learner support group or equivalent that provides opportunities for learners to meet together for skill development or personal development
- Opportunities for learners to participate in and evaluate program planning and operations activities and documentation of the ways in which learners have participated

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IV. VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT

A. Volunteer Recruitment A program's activities should include:

- Identification of target populations of potential volunteers
- The specification of strategies for reaching the target populations of volunteers
- Varied approaches that can be used to recruit volunteers who are likely to be appropriate matches for program participants
- A process for determining the number of volunteers that can reasonably participate in a program and for determining when additional resources are needed to meet the program's needs

B. Training for Tutoring and Nontutoring Volunteers A program should have:

- An orientation and initial screening process for volunteers
- A structured training program that incorporates the guidelines defined by Laubach Literacy Action for effective tutor workshops
- A process for assessing the training needs of volunteers
- Periodic in-service training opportunities for volunteers
- A process for monitoring tutors' instructional activities and for providing constructive feedback to tutors regarding their performance
- A process for training and monitoring the performance of volunteers who perform nontutor functions in a program
- A process for monitoring the effectiveness of training

C. Volunteer Management A program should have:

- A process for recording all training activities in which volunteers participate
- A communications network for disseminating information to volunteers
- A formal recognition process for volunteers

LAUBACH LITERACY ACTION

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